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**Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples**

# Question of Western Sahara

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/91, summarizes the last report submitted by the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the situation concerning Western Sahara for the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 (S/2014/258).

* A/69/150.

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1. On 11 December 2013, the General Assembly adopted resolution 68/91 on the question of Western Sahara without a vote. The present report, covering the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014, is submitted in accordance with paragraph 7 of the aforementioned resolution.

2. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2099 (2013) of 25 April 2013, I submitted a report to the Security Council on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2014/258 of 10 April 2014). In that report, I informed the Council of the activities of my Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, Christopher Ross, to promote negotiations on Western Sahara, and of the existing challenges to the operations of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

3. During the reporting period, my Personal Envoy, concluding that 13 rounds of face-to-face talks on the basis of the parties' two proposals of April 2007 had produced no results, embarked upon a period of bilateral consultations with the parties and neighbouring States to gauge whether the parties were prepared to be flexible in developing the elements of a compromise solution and how the neighbouring States could be of assistance. The broad lines of this new approach were first presented to the parties and neighbouring States by my Personal Envoy during his visit to the region in March-April 2013. He presented the parameters of the new strategy during a trip to the region in October 2013, and took the first steps toward its implementation in January, February and March 2014. In all those activities, and particularly in his periodic interaction with Western Saharans themselves, my Personal Envoy benefited from the reporting, insights and logistical assistance of my Special Representative for Western Sahara and of the entire MINURSO staff.

4. Following a series of bilateral consultations on the margins of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, my Personal Envoy travelled to the region from 12 to 25 October 2013 to make the acquaintance of new interlocutors in Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania and to confirm their readiness to proceed with the new approach outlined during his previous consultations. He asked the parties to name small working groups to engage with him in this new phase and made it clear to both parties and neighbouring States that future discussions would have to address both of the crucial aspects of the Security Council's repeated guidance: first, the substance of a mutually acceptable political solution, and second, the means by which self-determination will occur.

5. At all stops, my Personal Envoy emphasized that flexibility is needed from all concerned if progress is to be made, since the negotiating process is being conducted under Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, and each party is thus free to accept or reject the proposals of the other. He recalled that, for the United Nations, the formal parties to the negotiations are Morocco and the Frente Polisario, and he reiterated his readiness to continue encouraging the neighbouring States to assist in finding a way forward.

6. During the period from November 2013 to March 2014, my Personal Envoy initiated a new series of consultations with members of the Group of Friends of Western Sahara, visiting successively Washington, D.C., Paris and Madrid. In those consultations, he sought the renewed support of interlocutors for his new approach and for his emphasis on the need for the parties to address both the substance of a mutually acceptable political solution and the means of exercising self-determination. He also requested that the members of the Group join him in impressing upon the parties the need for flexibility in the search for a compromise.

7. Interlocutors in all three capitals expressed their support for my Personal Envoy's new approach and their understanding of the need to address both the substance of a solution and the means of achieving self-determination. Similar visits to London, Moscow and other capitals will be arranged on a mutually agreed schedule.

8. From 18 to 30 January 2014, my Personal Envoy visited the region to take the first practical steps in the new approach by presenting a number of questions to the parties to clarify the issues, their positions and their readiness to be flexible. To preserve the confidentiality of the discussions, and as agreed with the parties and neighbouring States, he made no statements to the press.

9. In Rabat and in Tindouf, my Personal Envoy met with the parties' newly formed working groups to present questions tailored to each party, on a confidential basis. These were deliberately challenging, designed to push the parties outside their comfort zone, introduce them to conversations different from those of the past and encourage them to demonstrate flexibility as they begin to consider alternatives to their initial positions and to search for elements of compromise. In Algiers and in Nouakchott, the emphasis was on encouraging the Governments of Algeria and Mauritania to find new ways to assist in the search for a solution.

10. In every encounter, my Personal Envoy made it clear that, for some 30 years, the United Nations had used all possible means to help the parties to reach a settlement, including the negotiation of plans, the organization of face-to-face meetings and, now, bilateral consultations with the possibility of shuttle diplomacy. He emphasized that options were running out for the negotiating process and that progress needed to be made in the course of 2014, since delays were to no one's advantage. In that regard, his contacts with the members of the Group of Friends had revealed a growing impatience and mounting pressure to deliver tangible results, lest the continued instability and tension in the wider Sahel and the growing frustration of the refugee population in the camps near Tindouf begin to feed upon each other in ways detrimental to the interests of peace and security throughout the region.

11. My Personal Envoy returned to the region from 27 February to 7 March 2014 to meet with the working groups formed by Morocco and the Frente Polisario and to receive their responses to the questions put to them during the consultations held in January 2014. He also pursued his discussions in Algeria and Mauritania on how best they could contribute to the search for a settlement.

12. In agreeing to the new approach presented during previous consultations, the parties had also agreed to a code of conduct that imposed the rule of confidentiality in their discussions with my Personal Envoy, except when they explicitly agreed that something could be shared more widely. That being the case, my Personal Envoy again refrained from making any statements to the press. At this early stage, he has only reported that the responses received in the first exercise with the parties remained within the parameters of their respective formal proposals, despite the exhortations from many quarters that they go beyond their proposals and demonstrate flexibility in identifying elements of compromise. At the same time, he has reflected a measure of hope that the parties may be able to take a more flexible approach in future discussions.

13. During the reporting period, MINURSO continued to monitor adherence to the military agreements and the ceasefire regime by conducting ground and aerial patrols, as well as visiting units of the Royal Moroccan Army and the military forces

of the Frente Polisario. MINURSO military and police personnel also provided medical and logistical support for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), whose staff is fulfilling its mandate requirements in the camps and implementing its programme of confidence-building measures in accordance with the agreed Plan of Action and in conformity with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

14. My Special Representative maintained regular contact with the parties to foster constructive dialogue in discussions on Mission mandate implementation and related operational matters, and to employ his good offices to promote the resolution of issues relating to the ceasefire and confidence-building measures. He briefed and held multiple consultations with the Moroccan and Frente Polisario authorities, visiting delegations from Member States and international non-governmental organizations, as well as officials in Algeria and Mauritania about the Mission's mandate and the challenges involved in its activities. My Special Representative also held regular meetings with the regional offices of the Moroccan National Human Rights Council in Laayoune and in Dakhla. On 12 May 2014, I appointed Kim Bolduc (Canada) as my Special Representative for Western Sahara and Head of MINURSO. She will assume her functions on 1 September.

15. The Mission's political office maintained regular and constructive engagement with the respective Moroccan and Frente Polisario coordinators for MINURSO. The Mission continued its efforts to improve the scope of its reporting to the Security Council, to the Secretariat, and in support of my Personal Envoy, focusing on local developments and situational analysis, drawing on open-source information.

16. The Mission continued to make significant progress in reducing the threat and impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war, through effective support to humanitarian action east of the berm, and effective cooperation continued between the Mine Action Coordination Centre and both parties.

17. As stated during his briefing to the Security Council in April 2014, my Personal Envoy intends to pursue his bilateral consultations, within the framework of the successive Security Council resolutions, in preparation for a resumption of face-to-face talks. He had informed the parties and the neighbouring States that he intended to return to the region every six weeks beginning in May 2014. While all interlocutors agreed in principle to that calendar, Morocco expressed reservations over parts of my report of April 2014 to the Security Council on Western Sahara (S/2014/258) and stated its desire to clarify the objectives and framework of the negotiating process before agreeing to dates for the next trip to the region. In June 2014, my Personal Envoy, as well as several United Nations senior officials, held extensive consultations with Morocco in New York. My Personal Envoy also met with members of the Group of Friends, who stressed the need for a speedy resumption of mediation efforts. My Personal Envoy expects all interlocutors to be ready to continue the negotiating process before his next briefing to the Council in October 2014.

18. I remain concerned over the continued stalemate in the negotiating process and remind the parties and the international community of their respective responsibilities to find and foster a solution to the conflict. I therefore reiterate my call to the parties to move towards a solution without further delay and, to that end, urge them to engage in genuine negotiations with the support and facilitation of my Personal Envoy.